## News from the Wyoming Department of Health

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## **Smoke from Wildfires Can Cause Health Concerns**

CHEYENNE – Wyoming health officials are asking residents to be mindful of the health effects from wildfire smoke as the state's summer fire season continues.

"Obviously, everyone knows to avoid flames when in the vicinity of a blaze," said Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director. "But that's not the only danger. Wildfire smoke can hurt your eyes, aggravate respiratory problems and worsen the symptoms of heart or lung disease."

Wildfire smoke contains gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plants.

Sherard said people who have pre-existing heart and respiratory conditions, including allergies, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), are especially susceptible to wildfire smoke's ill effects. Older adults are more likely to be affected because they are more likely to have heart or lung disease.

Children are vulnerable because their airways are still developing and because they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Children also are more likely to be active outdoors.

"Those at-risk should limit their exposure to smoke," Sherard said. "Pay attention to local air quality reports, and listen and watch for news or health warnings about smoke and recommended safety measures including evacuation."

"If you are advised to stay indoors, it's important to keep indoor air as clean as possible," Sherard said. He offered the following suggestions:

- \*Try to keep windows and doors closed.
- \* Keep the fresh-air intake closed and the filter clean if you run an air conditioner.
- \* Seek shelter elsewhere if you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed.
- \*When smoke levels are high, do not use anything that burns, such as candles, fireplaces or gas stoves.
  - \*Do not vacuum, because vacuuming stirs up particles already inside your home.
  - \*Do not smoke, because smoking puts even more pollution into the air.